

Before I knew what affliction meant, I was ready sometimes to wish for it. . . . But now I see the Lord had his time to scourge and chasten me. The portion of some is to have their affliction by drops, now one drop and then another, but the dregs of the cup, the wine of astonishment (like a sweeping rain that leaveth no food) did the Lord prepare to be my portion.

—The Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson (1682)

And so there is pain but not regret, not really,
though I still cry for my lost child, my side aches on rainy days,
and Joseph knows so much less of me.

I have tried to tell him how it was, how
after I was thoroughly hungry I was never again satisfied,
but he has not heard the Indians whooping in the night,

he has never huddled among them in a rain-battered wigwam.
When I do my impression of Weetamoo, preening in her English costume,
he squints at me and shakes his head.

He does not understand why I suck the marrow out of bones,
lick honey from my fingers, gulp wine like creek water.
He does not like it when I offer to edit his sermons, add a story or two.

As for Quanopin, sometimes I look out the window
and, hearing hoof beats, dream that he has come.
Who would believe I miss his rough kindness, his leafy breath?

When they bought me back,
they could not have guessed, not any of them,
what else they were getting:

snow squalls in my lungs,
blood on my tongue, oak leaves in my hair.
Nux instead of yes.

—Hilary Holladay